The University of Chicago

ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY, ANTI-SEMITIC ORGANIZATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES SINCE 1933

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

1939

BY

DONALD S. STRONG

Private Edition, Distributed by
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LIBRARIES
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

1942

The University of Chicago

ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY, ANTI-SEMITIC ORGANIZATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES SINCE 1933

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

1939

BY

DONALD S. STRONG

R. UNIV.
BIBLIOTHEEK
LEIDEN

Private Edition, Distributed by
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LIBRARIES
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

1942

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/IA41544324_0100

In the years 1933-1938 eighty-two organizations have been engaged in disseminating in the United States the anti-semitic ideology on which Hitler rose to power in Germany. Although anti-semitism as a political ideology had appeared in this country prior to 1933, it existed on a very small scale. In 1933, the year Hitler became chancellor of Germany, nine anti-semitic organizations were founded in the United States. Sixteen more appeared in 1934, and in the following years they have formed at the rate of about a dozen a year. The rise to power of the German National Socialists on an anti-semitic ideology, however, is not the only instance in recent European history when important political groups have chosen anti-semitism as their banner. Anti-semitism was prominent in the reaction against the revolution of 1905 in Russia. In the Russian civil war of 1918-1921 anti-semitism was made use of by the White armies, and in 1919 when the Poles drove out the invading Bolsheviks, they launched simultaneously a brutal anti-semitic movement. The brief post-war Bolshevik regime in Hungary was put down in the name of anti-semitism. A feeble movement of this kind exists in England in the form of Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, and in 1938 anti-semitism became part of the official ideology of Italian Fascism. Thus, anti-semitism as a political ideology has appeared frequently in recent European history and since 1933 has made its first appearance on a significant scale in the United States. The extent and significance of this ideology in American politics can best be gauged by a study of the organizations that disseminate it.

It would be inaccurate to proceed further without noting that these organizations should be referred to as anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic groups, rather than simply as anti-semitic. The adjective revolutionary is used here to describe a demand for a fundamental change in the social order. The demands of such groups as the socialists and the communists are clearly revolutionary demands. Anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic, then, is the correct label for these groups, for wherever anti-semitism appears

in the form of a political ideology it is associated with anti-revolutionary sentiments. "All Jews are communists; all communists are Jews" is the popular expression of this point of view. The European anti-semitic movements--those in Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Russia--were accompanied by an anti-revolutionary ideology. Note that there are vast numbers of anti-revolutionary organizations in America that are not anti-semitic--for instance, such well known groups as the Daughters of the American Revolution, the United States Chamber of Commerce, and the American Legion; but an anti-semitic organization that is not anti-revolutionary is most difficult to find.

The earlier assertion that in the years 1933-1938 there have been eighty-two anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic organizations in the United States gives one the impression that the movement is much stronger than it actually is. One may be led to believe that the country is being swept by a huge wave of anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic sentiment. This erroneous impression may be dispelled by noting that most of these organizations are very small. Not only are they small but there even arises the question whether they can be correctly called organizations. The term organization suggests membership cards, elected officers, dues, and meetings at stated intervals. Only a few of the eighty-two groups meet these specifications. Generally these "organizations" consist of a pompous name, a fanatic, and a mailing list. Further, the figure eighty-two includes all the groups that have existed in the six year period. Many of these are now inactive; some, in fact, were heard of only once.

The large number of organizations in the field has made it appear practical to confine this study largely to an intensive examination of ten of them. This group of ten includes all the more important groups, viz., the Silver Shirts, the German-American Bund, the Defenders of the Christian Faith, and the Edmondson Economic Service, as well as certain smaller groups selected because they are typical. Generalizations on the basis of this sample, it is assumed, will be valid for the entire movement. The generalizations that we wish to make will concern the following: propaganda, leadership, membership, finance, efforts to form a united front, and the probable future of the movement.

The propaganda of these organizations is disseminated through the following channels--newspapers, magazines, pamphlets,

leaflets, newsletters, public meetings, and books. Of these the pamphlet is the most widely used medium; the magazine and the newsletter are next in importance. The propaganda spread through these channels is essentially the ideology on which the National Socialists rose to power in Germany, with minor variations to adapt it to the American environment. Another way of saying the same thing is to say that the ideology is based on the famous forgery The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. This document purports to be a written agreement of the leaders of world Jewry setting forth the Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world and subjugate the Gentiles to the Jews. Conspiracy is the important word. All Jews are engaged in a conscious conspiracy to rule the world. All the troubles of the modern world, it is alleged, can be explained as ramifications of the Jewish plot. Communism is essentially Jewish, and it is the Jew's chief weapon. International banking is also Jewish-controlled, and, strange to say, the international bankers work in close co-operation with the communists. By manipulating gold these Jewish bankers cause depressions and so produce the discontent which is such fertile soil for the growth of revolutionary ideas--so the allegation goes. Jewish control of the press further facilitates their spreading revolutionary ideas. More insidious still is the Jew's method of weakening Gentile resistance to Jewish domination by corrupting Gentile morals. Hence, such threats to morality as the following are blamed on the Jews--alcohol, prostitution, the drug traffic, nudism, and obscenity in the theatre and in the films. Distinctly American ramifications of the plot are the New Deal and the C.I.O., both of which are held to be dominated by communistic Jews. Liberal professors and clergymen and persons active in peace societies are likewise held to be involved in the international conspiracy as dupes of the Jews.

In view of this Jewish-communist plot, what do these anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic organizations propose to do? In other words, what is their goal and by what means do they intend to reach it? These eighty-two organizations taken as a group have no clear-cut goal. Their literature is full of statements purporting to be facts about the Red-Jew conspiracy, but demands as to what to do in the face of this deplorable situation are rare. In short, this movement has no constructive program to offer save the vague, implicit demand to throw out of places of political

power all the Jews and persons alleged to be revolutionaries. One may, however, wish to push the matter farther and ask whether some of these organizations do not describe their goal by the word fascism. Of the ten groups studied intensively only one, the Silver Shirts, states frankly that it is working for fascism. A second group has spoken more guardedly of the need for fascism. In addition, expressions of contempt for democracy and of approval of the National Socialist dictatorship in Germany by four out of the ten groups suggest that several of these groups are not far from being willing to describe their goal as fascism. Regardless of the vagueness of the goal, do these groups believe in attaining it through violence? Speaking of the eighty-two groups in general, the answer is definitely negative. On the other hand, there are four groups that have at least once frankly advocated violence, and they include some of the most important organizations in the movement.

Turning our attention now to the leadership of these organizations, we find, first, that the leaders are primarily middle-aged or old men. Only two of the ten leaders whose organizations were studied intensively are under fifty. Four of them are over sixty. As for education, only two of the ten have carried their schooling to a university level. The former occupations of six of the leaders gave them skills fitting them for the leadership of their organizations. Four had developed skill in writing; two had skill in labor espionage. Only two of the ten leaders are known to be independently wealthy. The others make their living out of their organizations. The high percentage of leaders who secure their bread and butter from their organizations does not prove them insincere or indicate that they are "racketeers." On the contrary, abundant evidence shows that these leaders believe in the propaganda that they disseminate. For instance, one leader continued his anti-semitism despite the fact that by so doing he lost the support of some of his principal financial backers. There are a large number of unstable personalities among the ten leaders and their chief lieutenants. This fact is indicated by such matters as criminal records, sadistic utterances, and frequent marriages and divorces. With respect to the leadership of the American-German Bund it may be noted in passing that this organization is controlled from Germany. All decisions on important matters of policy come from abroad, and a high degree of super-

vision is exercised from Germany.

As for the membership that carries on under these leaders, we must recall that in most of these organizations no membership in the strict sense exists. Members, for the most part, must be taken to be those who are on the mailing lists of these groups and who are thus regularly exposed to their propaganda. The safest generalization about members is that they come almost exclusively from old American stock, in so far as one can judge by the Anglo-Saxon names the members bear. Names suggesting Latin or Slavic extraction, hence, first or second generation Americans, are rare. The American-German Bund is the one exception. Bund members are almost invariably persons of German birth. Second generation German-Americans in the Bund are a distinct rarity. Thus, we have the peculiar situation of an organization of foreign-born and a group of organizations made up exclusively of people of old American stock disseminating the same propaganda and in many cases actively co-operating.

As far as class status is concerned, the members of these groups may be described as middle class. That these organizations are not exclusive groups open only to the wealthy is obvious. That they have little proletarian membership is indicated by the militantly anti-C.I.O. attitude of all the groups, the fact that two of the important leaders are former labor spies, and by the absence of any references to manual toilers or factory workers in the correspondence of these organizations. The middle class character of these groups is indicated by the fact that their correspondence and reports of their meetings refer repeatedly to clergymen, physicians, lawyers, and engineers being in their membership. The field representative of one of the anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic groups addressed Rotary and Kiwannis Clubs, two definitely middle-class organizations, and tried to recruit members there. The correspondence of the Silver Shirts, one of the largest groups, frequently refers to thirty-second degree Masons and Scottish Rite Shriners--another indication of the middle-class membership. Another sign of the middle-class nature of the membership is the fact that three leaders try to sell their literature on the ground that it is secret information on the doings of the revolutionaries that every business man needs for the intelligent conduct of his business. The assumption is that the prospective customers are highly enough placed in the business world

to need such information. A study of the addresses of the members of the Chicago local of the Bund indicates that most of them live in areas where the median rental is slightly below the average for the whole city, thus suggesting that they are a lower-middle-class group. Taking the whole group of anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic organizations, it is not possible to designate the membership as either upper- or lower-middle-class, for there is considerable variation among organizations in this respect, certain of them having a much higher proportion of wealthy members than others.

A related question is how the class composition of the membership of an anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic group differs from one that is merely anti-revolutionary. An answer is furnished from an examination of the Paul Reveres, one of our ten groups and one which we can class as a borderline case of anti-semitism. It is so classed because while it is nominally only anti-revolutionary, its leader has actually written and disseminated anti-semitic literature, but the bulk of the membership was unaware of this fact. An examination of the membership shows that a larger proportion of persons of wealth, education, and distinction is connected with this group, which is supposedly only anti-revolutionary, than with any of the other groups. Similarly it is common knowledge that a high proportion of persons of wealth and social position are connected with such organizations as the United States Chamber of Commerce and the Daughters of the American Revolution, which distribute anti-revolutionary propaganda but avoid anti-semitism. These facts lead to the conclusion that while anti-revolutionary activity is within the mores and is always acceptable, anti-semitic activity is counter to the mores. Americans of wealth and distinction will affiliate openly with anti-revolutionary groups, but for the present time at least, they are unwilling to embrace anti-semitism. However, there is no reason to believe that, given the accentuation of the conditions favorable to the spread of this ideology, the upper classes will not eventually overcome their hesitancy to accept it and adopt it along with the rest of the population.

The membership is primarily Protestant, that is, there is a higher proportion of Protestants in these organizations than there is in the whole American population. One of the organizations--but only one of them--is outspokenly anti-Catholic in its propaganda. This is the Defenders of the Christian Faith,

one of the largest groups. The Silver Shirts, another important group, while carefully avoiding any anti-Catholic utterances, have so many former Klansmen in their membership that one would hardly expect to find numerous Catholics there. In addition, the fact that none of the ten leaders are Catholic cuts down the likelihood of a large Catholic membership.[1] A Catholic leader would have an entrée into his own religious group and would probably be able to interest a number of his co-religionists in his organization. Finally, as we have pointed out, almost all the members are of old American stock and have English names. Since the majority of American Catholics are of comparatively recent immigrant stock and have other than English names, the presumption is very strong that there is a higher proportion of Protestants in these organizations than there is in the whole American population.

Though members are to be found in all parts of the United States, the greatest concentration of membership is on the Pacific coast and in the New York metropolitan region. On the Pacific coast the three largest organizations--the German-American Bund, the Silver Shirts, and the Defenders of the Christian Faith--are very strong. Furthermore, the percentage of the eighty-two groups with their headquarters on the Pacific coast is far in excess of the percentage of the total American population in that region. With only 6.7 per cent of the population, the Pacific coast, nonetheless, houses the headquarters of 19.5 per cent of the organizations. More precisely, Southern California and the state of Washington seem to be the places on the Pacific coast where membership is heaviest. The New York metropolitan region houses the headquarters of fifteen groups, and it is the stronghold of the Bund. Of the Bund's fifty-five locals, seventeen of them, including the largest and most active ones, are located in this region. Here, too, the Bund has held its largest and best attended meetings.

The money which pays for the dissemination of propaganda and provides the leaders their bread and butter comes from the following sources: sale of literature, dues, gifts, and certain minor sources such as advertising and collections taken at meetings. Gifts may be classed as either <u>small donations</u> or <u>gifts</u>

---

[1]Father Coughlin's turning anti-semitic in the last few months of the six year period covered by this study will in the future probably produce a larger proportion of Catholic anti-semites.

from the wealthy. Four of the ten organizations solicited contributions of one or two dollars. Six of the ten received more generous contributions from the wealthy. The history of these organizations shows that they require gifts from the wealthy if they are to live anything more than a most precarious existence. However, these gifts from the wealthy should not give the impression that great industrialists are contributing handsomely to these organizations: Only a small number of wealthy persons contribute to this movement, and those that do contribute do not give vast sums. The American financial élite as a whole is unaware of the existence of these anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic organizations.

These comments on finance apply as much to the American-German Bund as to the other organizations. Although the policy of the Bund is controlled from abroad, its sources of income appear to be almost wholly American. The only known form of financial aid that the Bund gets from abroad consists of the large advertisements of the Hapag-Lloyd Steamship Lines and of the German Railways that appear in the Bund's paper. However, this subsidy constitutes a very small proportion of the Bund's total income. To be sure, the Bund may receive more extensive financial aid from Germany that has simply never been brought to light; yet repeated investigations of the organization by Congressional committees, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and numerous amateur investigators have never revealed any such aid. Moreover, the fact that the Bund has found ample sources of support here in the United States, plus the fact that Germany is in no position to be exporting capital, makes it quite safe to assert that the Bund's sources of finance, with the exception noted above, are entirely American.

In several instances these eighty-two groups have been referred to as a movement. The use of this term to describe these eighty-two organizations is not completely justifiable. Although they all disseminate the same ideology, they are not a movement in the sense that they have formed into a unified group under one recognized leader. Despite three efforts to form a united front, the most striking feature about this group of organizations is their complete disunity. However, forms of cooperation short of forming a united front do occur. Organizations distribute each other's literature, they occasionally hold joint meetings, and leaders address other organizations and serve

on their board of directors. Moreover, the leaders of all these organizations know one another personally. The inability to form a united front is due simply to the fact that there are too many prima donnas. None of the leaders are willing to subordinate themselves to a national head. Since nearly all the important leaders make their living out of heading their groups, they hesitate to fuse into a single organization for fear of losing their source of income. Moreover, the road to a unified movement is also blocked by a conscious rivalry between the two most eligible candidates for the leadership of such a movement, viz., Pelley of the Silver Shirts and Winrod of the Defenders of the Christian Faith.

What of the future of the movement? Will it shortly pass out of existence and be forgotten, or will it grow and become a truly powerful movement in American politics? Although a political scientist cannot be asked to foresee the future precisely and thus answer these questions directly, he can fairly be asked to state the conditions under which a given movement will increase or decrease in strength. Before enumerating these conditions, a word should be said as to how they were arrived at. The most accurate method of determining the conditions under which this ideology flourishes would be to make a detailed examination of the economic and political conditions of all the countries in which it has appeared. Unfortunately the standard works on the history of anti-semitism are not written in such terms, and so ambitious a project is beyond the scope of this study. This list of conditions is arrived at, instead, on the basis of our general knowledge of the conditions under which ideologies are accepted or rejected. The following are the conditions under which American anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic organizations will increase in number and size: (1) periods of economic depression; (2) war, threats of war, or any other event that results in an intensification of nationalism; (3) the growth of a strong revolutionary movement or the focusing of public attention through widespread publicity on what is alleged to be a revolutionary movement; (4) the extension of a strong anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic movement to other countries and the increase in prosperity and international prestige of those countries where this ideology is in power; (5) an increase of Jewish immigration to the United States; and (6) the rise of Jews to prominent political offices

in the United States.

Periods of economic depression produce widespread discontent which weakens the grip of the old ideology and produces fertile soil for any competing ideology. Recall how various American depressions have produced the competing ideologies associated with the names Greenbacks, Populists, Dr. Townsend, and Father Coughlin. Recall, too, that the National Socialist movement in Germany with its anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic ideology rose and came to power during periods of economic deprivation and that this same ideology appeared in America on a significant scale during the Great Depression. This particular ideology is adapted to growth during depressions because it can present the "communistic Jew" as the cause of the depression.

Any intensification of nationalism, whether from war or other causes, will be hard on all minorities including the Jews. Intensified nationalism demands that everyone conform to the standard national pattern. Any group that remains as an identifiable minority will be under the pale of suspicion. The Jew, the perpetual alien, will be suspected in any atmosphere of intense nationalism. The adherents of any revolutionary ideology constitute another minority which will not find an aroused nationalism a congenial atmosphere. Complete solidarity in the name of the nation will be demanded, differences will not be tolerated, and drastic methods will be used to crush any dissenting group. National humiliation, as in the case of defeat in war or even a profound diplomatic defeat, would accentuate the situation. A need for a scapegoat would arise, and the Jews and the adherents of revolutionary ideologies would be eligible scapegoats as they were in Germany.

The growth of a strong revolutionary movement would stimulate the growth of anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic organizations. The appearance of a revolutionary ideology calls forth an anti-revolutionary ideology to counteract it. Anti-semitism is useful in this latter connection in order to discredit the revolutionary ideology by pinning the Jewish label on it. The growth of a strong revolutionary movement was instrumental in calling forth the anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic ideology that appeared in Russia following the revolution of 1905 and during the civil war of 1918-1921, in Poland and Hungary in the immediate post-war years, and in Republican Germany. However, a genuine revolution-

ary movement is not necessary to stimulate the growth of these groups. If widespread publicity focuses public attention on what is alleged to be a revolutionary movement, the result will be the same. The high point of activity of these American organizations during the 1936 Presidential campaign is an example of this. In that case widespread publicity alleged that the mildly reformist New Deal was revolutionary, and this belief led to the growth of these organizations. Belief in the growth of a revolutionary movement is as important as its actual growth.

The extension of a strong anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic movement to other countries would stimulate its growth in the United States. The rise of the National Socialists to power in Germany had the immediate effect of starting these groups in this country. The more widely accepted this ideology becomes throughout the world the more readily will it circulate in the United States. Moreover, the growth in prosperity and international prestige of countries where this ideology is the ruling one will enhance the prestige of this ideology and increase its acceptability in the United States.

The fifth and sixth conditions, namely, the increase of Jewish immigration to the United States and the rise of Jews to prominent political offices, are less important factors but are nonetheless of significance. That an increase in Jewish immigration to the United States will encourage the spread of this ideology is suggested by the fact that the slightly increased proportion of Jews in the immigration quotas of several European countries has led the Silver Shirts to claim that "the Jewish-communist" assault on the United States has already begun. A really appreciable increase in Jewish immigration, for instance an increase resulting from an alteration of the immigration laws to admit large numbers of Jewish refugees, would put a good argument into the hands of these organizations and probably attract many new members to them.

As for the sixth condition, a basic contention of the anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic ideology is that "communistic Jews" are dominating the country, that they occupy the key governmental positions and are ruling us. In so far as any slight basis in reality for these contentions can be shown, this propaganda becomes that much more convincing. The propaganda of the whole movement has given a vast amount of publicity to the Jews in

prominent political positions in the national government under the New Deal and in the states. The greater the number of Jews in prominent political positions the more plausible will be the argument that the Jews are running the country--and the more eligible will Jewry be as a scapegoat for whatever difficulties the country encounters.

These, then, are the six conditions fundamental to the growth of the anti-revolutionary, anti-semitic ideology. The answer to the question "Will these organizations become stronger in the future?" must be made by reference to these conditions. These organizations will grow stronger in proportion to the number of these conditions present and to the degree to which each individual condition is present.